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To turn to the second point. I meant literally what I said—the modern imitation does not sound like old verse. The commonplace of literary history to which Professor Gummere alludes, the use of the long line in the fourteenth century—which assuredly crossed no “chasm in speech and song made by the Norman Conquest” for there was no such chasm, and which as surely was not a “genuine case of atavism,” for it had an unbroken tradition and merely came then to record in works of note—the use of the long line at this time has nothing to do with the matter. Its use by Langland, in his single or multiple personality, and by the author of *Pearl*, is no warrant for its use by the modern translator. And neither the fourteenth century verse, though in an unbroken tradition, nor Professor Gummere’s, though a deliberate imitation, sounds like the old epic verse. *Experto crede*—the physical ear, sensitive to the characteristic qualities of verse. Admittedly, the strict metrical scheme is not followed—only the “essentials” are kept; as well say one’s blank verse sounds like Milton’s because the “essentials” of blank verse are observed. The modern verse is diluted with small words and weakened by their subordinate accents. With its endless trains of A’s and B’s, it substitutes monotony for variety. Where sound meets sense, it misses the compactness of phrase of the old line. Light and even-accented, lacking the thronging of strong consonantal sounds, the repetition and contrast of vowel sounds, it entirely fails to attain the echoic effect demanded in really adequate translation; none of the clangor and reverberation of the old line reappears. Read aloud

oþ-þæt him æghwylc [þāra] ymb-sittendra  
ofer hron-rāde hýran scolde,  
gomban gyldan; þæt wæs gōd cyning!

and then read the translation,

till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gifts: a good king he!

It is idle to defend the use of a metre that emphasizes its unlikeness to its original by the very fact of the rococo character of its imitation, and all the more culpably misrepresents its pattern by pretending to reproduce it—especially when, demonstrably, it is a source of conscious

inaccuracy. The prose translator is not the *traduttore* who is *traditore*. It is the translator that uses this verse, with its specious pretence, who is the “smyler with the knyf.”

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#### ANTIGONE’S SONG OF LOVE.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—Antigone’s song of love, in Chaucer’s *Troilus*, II, 827–875, is not from the *Filostrato*. It was, I think, inspired by the *Paradis d’Amour* of Guillaume de Machaut.<sup>1</sup> This is not a case of translation, or even of imitation, but rather an example of adaptive mastery. I need not occupy space by quoting “parallel passages,”<sup>2</sup> for the test consists in examining the two pieces side by side and from beginning to end. Still, there can be no harm in remarking that Machaut’s lay, like Chaucer’s, is a woman’s song of happy and loyal affection, and that there is hardly an idea in either that does not recur in the other. Since *Troilus*’s song is taken from Petrarch, we surely need not be surprised that Antigone’s song should have been suggested by *Le Paradis d’Amour*, which is one of the best of Machaut’s minor poems.

In conclusion, I venture to file what I hope may seem to everybody an otiose caveat:—Chaucer’s “originality” is in no way attacked in the present note. Indeed, to run over the two poems, one after the other, is to get a new impression (or to renew an old one) of the freshness and vitalizing power of our incomparable poet.

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Tarbé, *Agnès de Navarre-Champagne*, pp. 39 ff., and by Chichmaref, *Guillaume de Machaut*, *Poésies Lyriques*, II, 345 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Chaucer, 827–836, with Machaut, 1–19, 33–36; 837–840 with 20–24, 38–50; 845–846 with 51–58; 848–850 with 115–122; 851–854 with 133–152, 165–169; 855–861 with 123–132; 869–873 with 33–41, 183–198. These comparisons are meant to be suggestive, not to exhaust the subject.